



Peninsula Historian

Newsletter of the Manly, Warringah &
Pittwater Historical Society Inc.

VOLUME 8 No. 4

April 2015

ISSN 1835-7628

FROM THE EDITOR

A couple of articles in this issue which are perhaps appropriate for the time.

Di Farina writes about a War Memorial she visited on her recent trip to Tasmania and the story of Billy Sing who certainly excelled as a brave, but forgotten, soldier and exceptional sniper.

Our President writes of a way of remembering those who died in military conflicts and also adds his usual, thoughtful President's Report. He has also contributed an article on a subject he has just been researching.

There are more photographs to accompany the articles on our web site www.mwphs.com

Bryant continues his 'Secret Places' articles. I hope he does not mind my addition of information about last month's site. North Head is of particular interest to me. I seem to spend a lot of my waking time up there and researching its various precincts.

But once again the contents of the Peninsular Historian come from the same small group of people. There must be other members who have visited somewhere, perhaps on holiday, and have found sites, a brief account of which would be of interest to others. Come on. Put pen to paper or fingers to keyboards and let's hear from you.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

While our Society participates in local government Heritage Committees, it is increasingly evident that certain building types will never appear on heritage lists. In a slower paced world, technological improvements came at a speed that permitted buildings to age gracefully and to be retained because of their historical significance. The arcades, such as in Chancery Chambers in Manly, come to

mind. In the current age, it is unlikely that we will see shopping malls appear, as they have a ten to fifteen year renovation cycle. Hospitals are another building type where the technological changes are unlikely to see them appear on future heritage lists.

There are a number of reasons for commercial buildings to be either demolished or substantially changed and it is appropriate that we recognise these:

- Changes in the numerical size of the user group.
- Changes in the age and sex of the user group.
- Changes in the technology in the delivery of goods and services.
- Maintenance costs associated with the aging of the building.
- Changes in the opportunity cost of real estate associated with the location.
- Changes in the mix of goods and services being demanded by users.
- Changes in the dynamics of urban distribution particularly relating to transport.
- Changes in the provision of public facilities.

The commercial and governmental buildings of the Peninsula respond to these factors and more so to the user population mix composed of residents and visitors. It is an unfortunate fact that, while the census provides us with residential population data, the data relating to visitors, is extremely vague at best.

While the above comments relate to institutional buildings, both public and private, the above factors, to a slightly different extent, apply to private dwellings. Today's kitchen in a private home is a long way different to even the homes of the 1970's. Walls and tables have disappeared to be replaced by an island serving and eating block. Other features have responded to technological

changes and the removal of walls have enabled the cook, often the lady of the house, to enjoy sight and conversation lines stretching out into the back garden, which on the Peninsula often includes a swimming pool.

I guess I have been thinking as to what a council Heritage List actually represents and where it sits in the overall history of the area. Most Council Heritage Lists have a heavy loading of private dwellings and secondly parks and gardens. Ideally a Heritage List should be balanced across the history of people, places and activities of the area. It is debatable as to whether this is being achieved.

WAR MEMORIAL TREE CARVINGS AT LEGERWOOD, TASMANIA - Di Farina

On the 15 October 1918, a ceremony was held in the Railway Reserve at Ringarooma Road (later Legerwood).

Nine trees were planted to honour soldieries from the district killed in World War I.

The trees honouring the soldiers were:

Douglas Fir – Alan Andrews
Giant Sequoia – Thomas Edwards
Deodar – William Hyde
Giant Sequoia - Robert Jenkins
Deodar – John McDougall
Douglas Fir – George Peddle
Deodar – John Risley
Weymouth Pines at each end of the avenue for Gallipoli and the Anzacs

The trees were to be lopped and wood carver Eddie Freeman was commissioned to do the carving.

(The street photo shows memorials to Alan Edwards (in the foreground) and the next Robert Jenkins.



SNIPER

The latest copy of the Outback magazine contained an article on Billy Sing, known as the Gallipoli Sniper, who in a few short months on the Gallipoli peninsula became the Allies greatest sniper, possibly the best sniper ever. He is reputed to have killed more men than any other foot soldier in history. Below is Billy's story which I have taken, in large part, from the Outback together with additional information from the Australian War Memorial. I noted that Billy died within days of my own grandfather, both deaths caused by the effects of mustard gas attacks they were subjected to during the war. Research shows that most soldiers were returned to the front line after 'recovering' from the effects of gas BUT they paid a terrible price later. Almost all soldiers who were gassed during WW1 died in their 30's, 40's and early 50's with virtually none living to reach old age. Reading their death certificates shows it was a horrible and painful death due to the damage the gas had caused to their lungs, throats and respiratory systems.

Gallipoli Sniper - Billy Sing

Billy Sing, nicknamed 'The Murderer' was a World War I hero, once known around the world. But by the time he died in 1943, alone and almost penniless he had all but been forgotten. Billy was born in 1886 in Clermont, QLD to a Chinese father from Shanghai and an Englishwoman. This son of a Chinaman rose above the racist attitudes and laws of the time and was a likeable young bloke admired for his sporting prowess, particularly with the rifle. While still a boy, the story went, he could shoot the tail off a piglet at 25 paces with a .22 rifle.

From the age of 15, Billy worked as a station hand, ringer and horse drover further cultivating his childhood bush skills, including hunting. He honed his shooting skills at the Clermont Rifle Club, and later at the rifle club in Proserpine. A regular winner of shooting prizes, he was also a good cricketer.

Sing was in his prime when he journeyed to Brisbane to join the 5th Light Horse Regiment in 1914. The 5th Light Horse was in Egypt when the ANZACs landed at Gallipoli. Leaving their horses behind, Billy's regiment deployed in May 1915 as Infantry to Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula. Trooper 355, Billy Sing became 'probably the most dangerous sniper in any army throughout the war', wrote Ion Idriess. Idriess sailed to war on the same boat as Billy and became a popular author after the war. He was also an experienced bushman and at times was Billy's spotter.

'Abdul the Terrible', as the Allies called him, was the

decorated Turkish sniper brought to Gallipoli to stop Sing. He methodically studied the Australian's handiwork; up to nine kills per day. Having finally located Sing's specially constructed 'possie', Abdul prepared to take down his prey, only to be shot between the eyes by Sing.

Abdul was one of Sing's 201 confirmed Gallipoli kills, though he probably took the lives of many more Turks there was not always a spotter to verify kills, and it was sometimes difficult to determine if targets that had been hit and fallen into trenches had actually been killed. Though bringing grief to Turkey, Sing's exploit saved Allied lives and was perfect propaganda. He was mentioned in dispatches, awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and lauded in newspapers from Sydney to San Francisco.

But it didn't go all Sing's way. He was wounded in August 1915, when a Turkish sniper hit the telescope of his spotter, who was badly wounded before the bullet finally came to rest in Billy's shoulder. As the weather deteriorated, Billy succumbed to the cold, wet weather and the appalling conditions in the trenches and was evacuated to Malta just weeks before the Allies withdrew from the Gallipoli peninsula.

Bouts of illness kept Billy in England for some time before he was deployed to the Western Front in January 1917 with the 31st Australian Infantry Battalion, where soon after he was wounded and sent back to England to recuperate. He wrote home, 'We had an awful time in France this winter; it was the coldest they've had for years.....It would break your heart to see the dead bodies lying around unburied.'

Following his discharge from hospital he was given leave. Sing headed to Edinburgh, where he had a whirlwind romance with a waitress Elizabeth Stewart. On 29 June they were married. A month later Billy was back in the trenches.

Private Sing was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre in early 1918, for his role in leading a patrol, killing several German snipers at Polygon Wood in September 1917. Over his period of service he contracted influenza, rheumatism, mumps, had been gassed, shot on two occasions, sustained shrapnel wounds to both legs and his back, spending quite some time in and out of hospitals, eventually causing his medical discharge.

The mustard gas caused lifelong lung disease for Billy and it signalled the end of his military career when in July 1918 he was shipped home. Despite having been wounded, gassed and ill several times he was declared fit and able to work when discharged in Brisbane.

For a time Billy was buoyed by an enthusiastic welcome in both Proserpine and later Clermont but that soon faded. He set out to be a sheep farmer like so many other soldiers on blocks donated to returned servicemen by the Federal Government, but his land was poor like many of the blocks in this flawed scheme. Almost a third of the soldiers turned farmers walked off the land, including Billy Sing.

There's no indication that Billy's wife was ever part of his new life. There is correspondence showing that he applied for Elizabeth to have free passage from Britain, it doesn't seem to have eventuated.

Though hampered by illness and his wounds, the failed sheep farmer still had to make a living. He turned to gold prospecting and did well enough to go on weekend sprees with his mining mates. He also got a reputation for heavy drinking and a bad attitude. When the gold ran out, Billy turned to labouring in Brisbane where he continued to work hard although complaining of pains in his heart, chest and back.

On May 19, 1943, Billy was found dead in his boarding house bedroom. Five shillings were also found but no sign of his war medals.

As his humble grave marker in the Lutwyche War Cemetery weathered away, Billy Sing was all but forgotten. 50 years after his death a newspaper article revived interest in this 'ace Australian sniper'. A plaque was erected on the site where he died and in 1995, a statue of Sing was unveiled with full military honours in his hometown of Clermont.

In 2004 Australian Army snipers named their Baghdad post the Billy Sing Bar & Grill. Last year, on the 66th anniversary of his death, wreaths were laid at Sing's grave during a ceremony attended by various dignitaries, including the Chinese Consul-General.

Di Farina

* The secret ballot was first used in Victoria and South Australia following the granting of responsible government. Other states introduced secret ballots as follows: 1856 - Victoria & South Australia 1858 - New South Wales & Tasmania 1859 - Queensland 1893 - Western Australia. The secret ballot was referred to as '*kangaroo voting*'. World wide, secret voting is often referred to as the '*Australian ballot*'.

* Female vote - Australia was the second country to give women the vote.

STOLPERSTEINE - STUMBLING BLOCK

There are plaques and then there are plaques. We have talked about plaques commemorating events and people on the Peninsula. To a certain degree, I think the Baby Boom Generation have nearly crowded out any commemoration by future generations, signalled by plaques particularly those on public seats. I came across another plaque project which is reputed to be the largest plaque project in the world and now encompassing 18 countries and has laid over 50000 plaques. It arose by the efforts of one man in Germany, who believed that those innocent victims of the Nazi concentration camps deserved some recognition as to their death in a WW 2 camp with no record of their departure from this earth and no acknowledgement of their contribution to their family and their local community.



The man is Gunter Demnig and his efforts started in 1995. His first stolpersteine or stumbling block in English was placed in Cologne. Demnig is a painter and after initial resistance has his project accepted by many major German cities. Initially he undertakes research about the victim of the Holocaust, usually at the instigation of family members and then determines where the small plaque will be laid, either at the last remaining residence of the deceased or his or her last working place.

Then he manufactures a concrete cube of 10cm which he covers with a sheet of brass. Then he stamps the details of the individual, : the name, the year of birth and the fate, as well as the dates of deportation and death , if known. The words “ Hier wohnte “ (here lived) grace most of the memorials but some at the place of employment refer to his or her work. In all cases , the brass covered cube will be inserted in the pavement outside the last known residence or working place.

Anyone can sponsor a stolpersteine and the cost is 120 euros. There is an interesting article in the New Yorker (FEB 16 2015) entitled “The Last Trial“ which describes the efforts of an American to place a stolpersteine for his great –grandmother who died in Auschwitz in early 1943. The article ends with the placing of that stone in the street where she once lived and this event in Berlin was witnessed by large group of family members. The article ends with a quotation from Martin Luther King, “ The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice “. This project, largely driven by one man, seems to be a superbly understated way of a country recognising a major debt to humanity.

Jim Boyce



SECRET SITE



The Baptist Church in Greenwood Avenue, Narrabeena. This church celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2010. A group from Dee Why Baptist Church decided to establish a church in the young suburb of Narrabeena in 1960 firstly by meeting in a tent in a front yard. Soon afterwards a small Girls Brigade was also started and as the church grew permanent buildings were erected largely through the voluntary labour of the parishioners. There are some foundational members of the church still worshipping in Greenwood Avenue. The North Manly Baptist Church closed its doors for the final time just prior 2010, sold their property in Corrie Road and the members amalgamated with Narrabeena Baptist Church.

Where is this Secret Site?



Do you have any information about this Secret Site or previous Secret Sites including data, reminiscences, references (internet, publications, etc.) then please write (MW&PHS, PO Box 695, Manly 1655) or email your response to jimboyce37@gmail.com.

The answer will be revealed in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Bryant Lavaring

PREVIOUS SECRET SITES - March 2015

This Secret Site is in the Third Quarantine Cemetery



located within the grounds of the North Fort at North Head, Manly.

Editor's Note:

The site is one of many managed by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

The site includes interesting walks through the bush with fantastic viewing areas and passing much of the World War II fortifications and facilities which became the School of Artillery after the war and until 1998.

The Trust has an Information Centre there, moving soon from the Gatehouse to just within North Fort behind the Bella Vista Cafe.

The Third Quarantine Cemetery is within the North Fort Precinct. It was located there so that the deceased from the bubonic plague could be buried at the prescribed depth which was not possible near the Quarantine Station there not being a sufficient depth of sand there. (It is also said that the two earlier cemeteries near the station were polluting the water at the station).

The memorial in the middle of the picture is to Private Hector Hicks (mechanic), 27th General Reinforcements. It is the tallest in the cemetery. He joined the forces in 1918 and took ship on board the *SS Medic* bound for Europe. However the war ended whilst the ship was at sea and so it turned

back. Unfortunately Hector contracted Influenza during the return journey and died in the Quarantine Station on 30 November 1918, aged 18 years and 9 months. 12 other soldiers and nine Italian reservists who had returned to Australia on the *SS Medic* also died at about the same time. They all died of influenza.

The grave with the cross next to that of Private Hicks is of Nurse Annie Egan who was on the staff of the Quarantine Station but died of pneumonia three days after Private Hicks on 3 December 1918 aged 27. Annie's death and burial caused a minor uproar as she was refused any family at her burial and also the attendance of a Catholic Priest.

The cemetery was extensively used during the outbreaks of the Bubonic Plague in Sydney.

JUST FOR A LAUGH

Thomas Edison's Mother: Of course I'm proud that you invented the electric light bulb. Now turn it off and get to sleep.

SERVICE STATIONS AND THEIR JOURNEY FROM TINS AND FUNNELS

It is interesting how a particular commercial facility changes over time, not only in its functions, but also in its ownership and its physical presence. It also has gone through some shifts in the description it has used, in going through a number of phases from originally a garage, then a petrol station or filling station and now to a service station, although many would argue that the service element has all but disappeared. For us on the Peninsula, the garage and the service station have parted ways with outlets such as the Long Reef Garage long ago dispensing with the petroleum element and concentrating on the maintenance of private and commercial vehicles. Meanwhile the service station on the Peninsula has concentrated on the corporate international brands with some notable exceptions. However, over nearly 120 years, one would expect a commercial sector to vibrate to social and economic changes and produce what we currently see in 2015.

1900 to 1920

Starting from 1900, one started to see the arrival of the automobile on the Peninsula, with a vivid photo of Sam Hordern driving his vehicle to an event in Palm Beach in 1904. One can categorically say that

there were no garages present at that time to either provide petrol or service his vehicle. Petroleum, at that time was bought in tins, either branded from the corner store or something adlibbed from your home and filled probably in the city. Manly, being the urban centre of the Peninsula at that time, was the first to see some action. In 1908, J W Nicholson established the New Manly and Pittwater Motor Car Company in Whistler Street on the current site of Manly Council's multi-storey car parking station. Shortly after this the business was taken over by William Wild who also started a car hire business. The American owned, Mobil Oil Company claims to be the first oil company active in Australia, but in those days, it was known as Vacuum Oil. In 1916, Vacuum launched its "Plume" brand of petrol, whose tins occasionally pop up in antique shops today, and also its "Laurel" brand kerosene which was at first a bigger seller. Australia did not produce its own oil, so during WW1 it remained reliant on overseas supply and did not enter into rationing, unlike WW2.

1920 to 1939

The second epoch of service stations, which were still called garages at that time, took off after the end of WW1 in 1919. In 1911, there were only 3978 motor vehicles registered in the whole of NSW. By 1921, this had grown to 33214, vehicles and by 1926, 127160. Like most wars, there had not only been death and destruction but also major improvements in technology and people were ready to accept the new, although not entirely understood. The motor car with its fuel, batteries and rubber tyres and fan belts was one of those technological breakthroughs. The machine that made the fuelling of cars and vans possible was the bowser. In 1905, there had been a breakthrough by C H Laessig in that he invented a gravity-fed system to deliver petrol from a storage tank to an automobile. However, the volume still needed to be quantified to close the sale. The invention of the petrol bowser by Sylvanus F Bowser in Fort Wayne, Indiana, provided the device that solved the problem. Initially these bowzers appeared at the kerbside but the number of petrol brands expanded very quickly. By 1920, Manly had at least six garages, all clustered in and around the Manly centre. There was the Manly Motor Garage in Whistler street, Rutherfords in Sydney Road, the Pacific in Raglan Street, William Sinden's Motor Engineers and Repairers in Sydney Road, and Slocombe and Robe's in Short Street.

Many of the brands that appeared with their highly identifiable bowser are largely unknown today. The previously mentioned "Plume" as well as others such as "Waratah" and "Atlantic" have long gone. However, there were the major companies such as

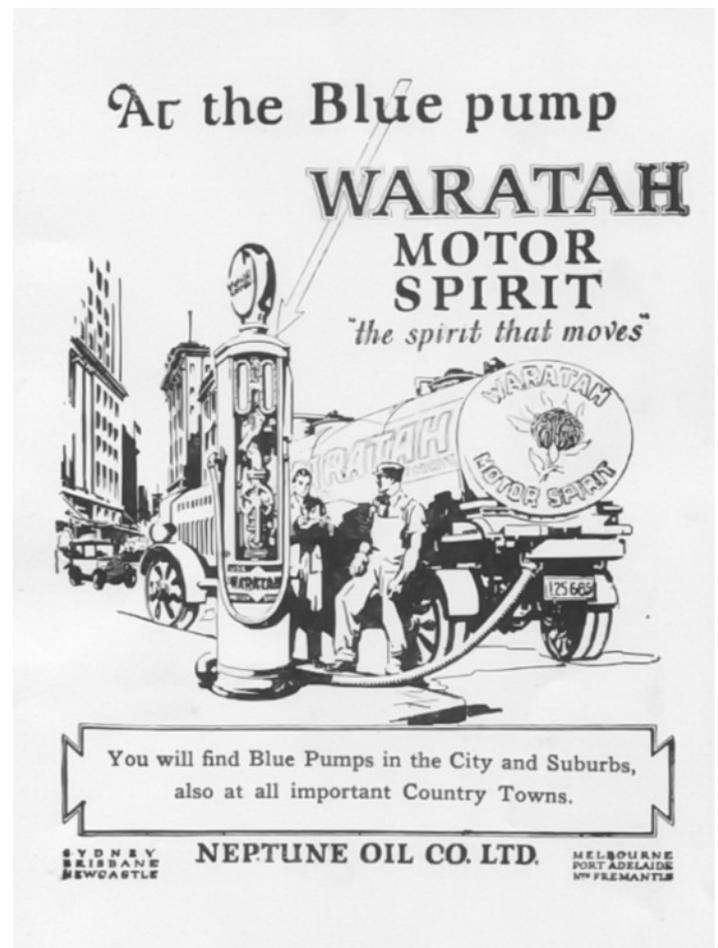
"Shell" which started to appear with the now familiar red and yellow livery and the large shell (A piece of trivia is that Shell actually started as a company dealing in shells). One brand that started at this time, and is still remembered fondly, is "Golden Fleece" which launched its "Golden Fleece" pump in 1920. Its distinctive golden merino trademark was soon a common sight for motorist and could be seen on the Peninsula.

While the Depression of the 1930's did slow any expansion in motor car ownership, there were changes in the presentation of the facility to the public. The original bowser had a glass cylinder at the top, with a metal casing extending to the base. The bowser was shortened and this permitted the complete casing of the device and far greater branding. Most bowzers now had a circular bowl with the brand logo emblazoned upon it, except for "Golden Fleece" which was unique in that respect. The 1930's also saw an improvement in road surfaces and design, which then impacted on the desired location of the service station and its ability to provide convenient access to its drive-through facilities. Garages were increasingly sited on corners with a greater attention to architectural style.

The concept of the garage pretty much originated in the USA and outlets in the main were owned by a petroleum company and were a one brand outlet. This was not the case in the UK, which was very much a case of the individual owner and a mixture of branded bowzers. Australia adopted the British model and the first one brand outlet appeared in Australia in 1950 and was slow to change, with multi brand outlets still trading in the 1970's.

Different architectural styles of the major building and pump area were slow to happen in Australia. In the USA, because of the greater dominance of major petroleum companies, there was an explosion of architectural styles from the east coast to the west, during the twenties and thirties. The design of cars moved on from the somewhat austere T model Ford to a multiplicity of more adventurous designs pursued by General Motors and the European carmakers. The service station was a new form of building across America and Australia and it was natural for popular architectural styles of the day being seen in the form of a service station.

Many houses on the Peninsula began to reflect an Art Deco design with greater emphasis on vertical and horizontal lines. The best example of an Art Deco garage was at the corner of Harbord Road and Pittwater Road, a site now occupied by a Bill Buckle



car dealership. The James Brothers garage had its pumps accessible from both sides of the corner and was covered by a distinctive oval shaped disc structure. The pumps below represented many different petrol brands, with their distinctive livery and design of the top. The office and work shop building was at the rear of the site away from the corner. While it carried on the Art Deco theme, it presented a more sedate exterior reflecting a dedicated approach to service, quality and cost.

Another local example of an imaginative approach to service station design was the Auckland Garage on the corner of West Promenade and Gilbert Street, Manly, opposite Gilbert Park. Unfortunately, although it has heritage listing, the building and forecourt now lies vacant awaiting a more positive future along with an empty site beside it, which was once occupied by the Civic Club. The Auckland Garage was built in a Spanish Mission style which was popular at the time and still has many residential examples in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater. Spanish Mission was a popular design for service stations in California at that time. The Auckland Garage had distinctive columns at the front with a ceramic tile design extending from the base to the roof above. The garage, built in the 1933, reflected the taste of the individual owner rather than an in-house corporate style which tends

to be the case today. Another example of a Spanish Mission garage was to be found at Avalon, pretty much where the Coles Express outlet is today. The Avalon Service Station, as it was named, reflected a trend in adopting a more contemporary name and a garage was increasingly identified as a automobile repair and maintenance business. The Avalon operation was smaller and connected to a the Avalon Beach Refreshment Rooms which reflected a trend that was going to make itself more evident 70 years later.

During the 1930's petroleum brand advertising was fierce both at the bowser with individual bowser presentations but also on the radio and in print. Street and highway signage was also extensive and, although difficult to see, there was a "Plume" street sign outside the Jane's Service Station on Harbord Road.

Jim Boyce

(Conclusion in May Peninsula Historian).

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015?

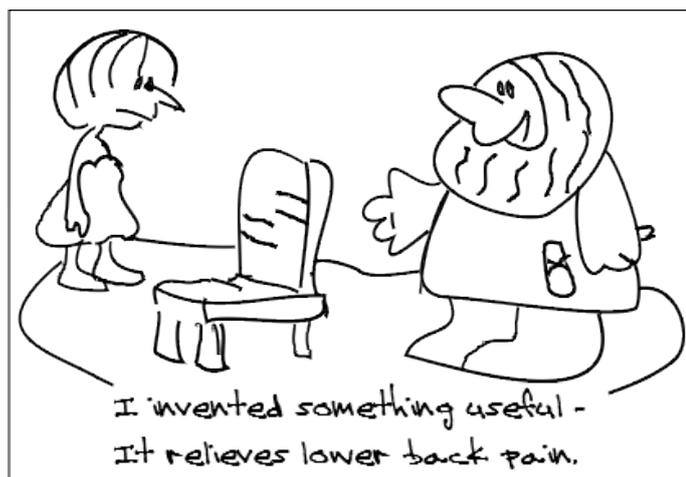
A renewal form is available on the web site
www.mwphs.com

If unsure please contact Di Farina, Membership Secretary, on the 'Contacts' page of the web site.

We welcome two new members who have joined us this month

Seaforth Anderson and Pamela Frei.

We hope you find your membership with us enjoyable and fruitful.



The next meeting of the society is on Saturday 11 the April at 2 pm at the Narrabeen Tramshed.

Dr Paul Lancaster will speak on
'Sydney and Peninsula Doctors in the Great War'



Manly, Warringah and Pittwater
Historical Society Inc.

Established 1924

Patron

Alan Ventress BA DipLib

President

Jim Boyce

Secretary & Membership Secretary

Diana Farina

Treasurer

Barbara Davies

Minutes Secretary

Clive Halnan

Archivist

Vacant

Postal Address

PO Box 695 Manly, NSW 1655

www.mwphs.com

Our Officers can be contacted, by email,
through our web site.

www.mwphs.com